

Gaultheria ovatifolia (Slender Wintergreen)

Conservation Status Rank Summary

Date Published: July 9, 2026

For details on assessment and ranking methodology, see: [Conservation Status Assessment Definitions, Process, Rank Factors, and Calculation of State Ranks for Montana Species](#)

Rarity and Trends

Rank Factor	Date Assessed	Value Factor Rating	Score	Data Source	Comments
Rarity					
Range Extent	2026-07-09	37600.5 km ² F = 20,000-200,000 km ²	3.930	MTNHP Range Maps	None
Area of Occupancy	2026-07-09	* E = 26-125 4-km ² grid cells	2.750	MTNHP Databases	The available observations occupy approximately 30 grid cells. Undocumented-unreported locations almost certainly occupy additional grid cells.
Number of Occurrences	2026-07-09	* C = 21 - 80	2.750	MTNHP Databases	The available observations group into about 25 occurrences. Additional undocumented-unreported occurrences very likely exist.
Population Size	2026-07-09	* EF = 2500 - 100,000 individuals	[3.140, 3.930]	MTNHP Databases, Expert Opinion	Population levels are poorly documented. Most observations lack quantitative estimates of population size. However, two occurrences were reported to contain over 1,000 stems each. Several additional occurrences were reported as "common" or "large colonies". Statewide populations are likely greater than 10,000 plants. The species growth form also makes determinations of population sizes difficult.
# of Occurrences in Good Condition	2026-07-09	* CD = Few to some (4-40) occurrences with good viability	[2.200, 3.300]	MTNHP Databases	At least a few occurrences appear to be large and have good viability.
% of Area Occupied in Good Condition			-		Factor not used in ranking.
Environmental Specificity	2025-03-01	Narrow B = Narrow; specialist or community with key requirements common	-	Expert Opinion	Factor not used in ranking. Assessed by Scott Mincemoyer
Rarity is calculated by averaging weighted factor scores: $((3.93 \times 1) + (2.75 \times 2) + (2.75 \times 1) + ([3.14, 3.93] \times 2) + ([2.20, 3.30] \times 2)) / 8 = [2.86, 3.33]$					
Trends					
Short-term Trend	2026-07-09	* U = Unknown	-	Expert Opinion	Factor not used in ranking. Short-term trends are unknown. The species occurs in both intact forests and on old or abandoned roadbeds. Whether particular populations are stable, or increasing or decreasing in abundance under

					recent successional dynamics and disturbance regimes is unclear.
Long-term Trend	2026-07-09	* U = Unknown	-		Factor not used in ranking. Long-term trends are unknown
No trend data used in this rank					

*Values may be absent if not precisely estimated; factors may still be assessed for rank if a Factor Rating can be assigned.

Threats

Rank Factor	Date Assessed	Value Factor Rating	Score	Data Source	Comments
Threats					
Overall Threat Impact		Low D = Low	5.500		Potential impacts are possible as several populations occur on or along old roadbeds and 1 population is along a utility corridor. Though negative impacts are possible, none have been documented so far, and though some potential threats exist, the overall magnitude and immediacy of these threats appears to be low.
Intrinsic Vulnerability	2025-03-01	Moderately vulnerable B = Moderately vulnerable	-	Expert Opinion	Factor not used in ranking. Assessed by Scott Mincemoyer
Threat score is calculated from Overall Threat Impact when available or Intrinsic Vulnerability if not: (5.50) = 5.50					

Individual Threats Data

Threat Category	Date Assessed	Impact Score	Scope	Severity	Immediacy	Comments
No individual threats data used in this rank						

Conservation Status Rank Calculation

Raw score

Rarity: $([2.86, 3.33] \times 70\%) + \text{Threats: } (5.50 \times 30\%) + \text{Trends: } (0.00) = [3.65, 3.98]$

Calculated Rank: S4

Accepted Rank	S3S4
Author(s)	Scott Mincemoyer
Rank Approved By	Montana Natural Heritage Program Staff
State Rank Reason	DRAFT: Requesting feedback on the 2026 revised rank, factors, and State Rank Reason outlined below and in the Conservation Status Rank Report. <i>Gaultheria ovatifolia</i> is a species of the Pacific Northwest that reaches its eastern extent in northwest Montana, where it is an uncommon species of mesic, forested habitats. Occurrences are mostly on publicly managed lands, including many on National Forest lands managed for multiple use. A few sites occur within Glacier National Park. Population levels are uncertain though they may be relatively robust. Population trends are unknown. As the species occurs in both intact forests and on old or abandoned roadbeds, it is unclear whether particular populations are stable, or increasing or decreasing in abundance under recent successional dynamics and disturbance regimes. Survey and monitoring data are needed to be able to more precisely determine population levels, assess condition and for assessing population trends. If collection of survey and monitoring data shows that populations are likely stable, or if additional populations are located, or if statewide populations are at the larger end of the current estimates, then a rank of S4 is likely appropriate.

Supplementary Information

Montana Natural Heritage Program. 2021. Conservation Status Assessment Definitions, Process, Rank Factors, and Calculation of State Ranks for Montana Species. 18 p.

https://mtnhp.mt.gov/docs/Montana_State_Rank_Criteria_20211201.pdf

Montana Field Guide Species Account:

<https://fieldguide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=PDERIOF040>

Predicted Suitable Habitat Model:

<https://mtnhp.mt.gov/resources/models/?elcode=PDERIOF040>

Information Needs

Information needs are assessed by considering the availability of factors used to assess species status as well as the quality of these assessments. Current information availability and quality to inform Conservation Status Rank for this species are highlighted.

Rank Factor	Assessment Category	Value	Criteria
General Status	Status Quality	Adequate	Calculated rank has low uncertainty and is represented by a single rank (e.g. S3); accepted rank may be adjusted to a range rank (e.g. S2S3)
		Poor	Rank assessed as SU or calculated rank has notable uncertainty and corresponds to a range rank with 2 or more values (e.g. S2?, S1S3, or S4S5)
Rarity	Range Quality	Adequate	Range polygon adequately represents area of probable occupancy and does not include substantial unoccupied areas; range may be adequately defined and still include areas of unsuitable habitat (e.g. mountain ranges for plains species)
		Marginal	Range polygon defined, but may include or exclude notable areas where the species may or may not occur on the landscape
		Poor	Range polygon not defined
	Habitat Quality	Adequate	Species-habitat relationship is well-defined (e.g. relevant literature or robust habitat model available)
		Marginal	Understanding of species-habitat relationship is adequate among some but not all habitats (e.g. literature covers similar habitats outside of Montana or habitat model performance is only somewhat adequate)
		Poor	Species-habitat relationship is not well understood
Threats	Threat Quality	Adequate	Threat Impact is a single value (including "Unthreatened")
		Marginal	Threat Impact assessed at more than one value (e.g. "High - Medium")
		Poor	Threat Impact is Unknown but Intrinsic Vulnerability is assessed
		Unknown	Threat Impact is Unknown and Intrinsic Vulnerability is not assessed
Trends	Recency	Current	Short-term Trend assessment date less than 10 years old
		Out of Date but Adequate	Short-term Trend assessment date is more than 10 years old or Unknown, but species is Unthreatened
		Out of Date	Short-term Trend assessment date more than 10 years old
		Not Available	Short-term Trend data are not available
	Trend Quality	Sufficient	Short-term Trend assessed at a single value or multiple values with a minimum trend greater than -10% (stable or increasing)
		Unknown but Sufficient	Short-term Trend is Unknown, but species is Unthreatened
		Poor	Short-term Trend is less than -10% (in decline) with two or more values selected
		Unknown	Short-term Trend is Unknown

Summary of Information Availability

Summary of Information Needs

Survey and monitoring data are needed to be able to more precisely determine population levels, assess condition and for assessing population trends.

Additional Threat Details

The table below contains the complete threats assessment for this species. While the Conservation Status Rank Calculation is based on cumulative, broadly categorized (Level 1) threats data, threats are assessed and tracked for more specifically categorized (Level 2) threats when available.

Threat Category	Date Assessed	Assessed By	Data Source	Scope	Severity	Immediacy	Comments
Transportation & Service Corridors - 4.1 - Roads & Railroads	2026-07-09	S. Mincemoyer	Expert Opinion	Restricted	Unknown	Unknown	Several populations occur on old roadbeds or along roadbanks used for past forest management. Though this is not an imminent or direct threat, potential use in the future could negatively impact these populations.
Transportation & Service Corridors - 4.2 - Utility & Service Lines	2026-07-09	S. Mincemoyer	Expert Opinion	Negligible	Unknown	Unknown	One occurrence is along a utility corridor that was being sprayed for weeds. It is unclear if the population was negatively impacted.